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The "labor state"

[Cleveland]

[1921]

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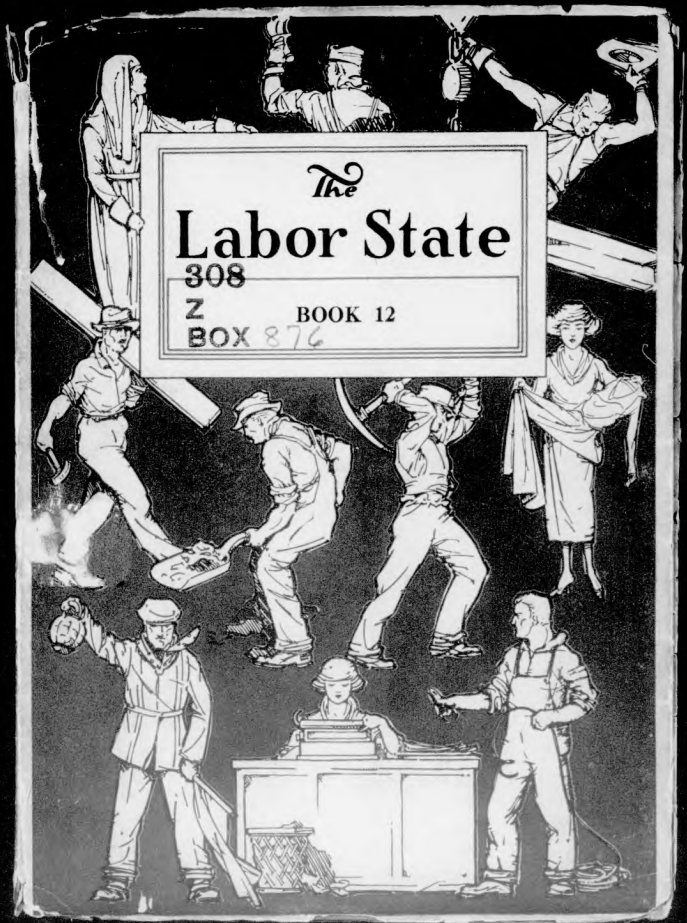

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PO

—*The National Republican*

AND SO DO WE—LIKE THIS!

THE "LABOR STATE"

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FEB 6 1956 GLS

FOREWORD

WHEN the English writer, H. G. Wells, was in Russia last fall, and talked with the leaders of the Bolsheviki, he found them full of a child-like surprise that no "social revolution" was taking place in Western Europe and America. The Bolsheviki had possessed themselves of the government of Russia, not because they ever represented a large section of the population, but because they were a united, determined and unscrupulous party in a sorely torn and troubled land. They believed, however, that in the more highly developed industrial countries, where there were many industrial workers, "Labor" in general ought to follow their lead: according to Bolshevist ideas, the "proletariat" of the "industrial nations" ought to "rise up" and seize the government. They could not understand why nothing of the sort had happened; and they were puzzled when Mr. Wells told them that in England, for instance, there were "at least two hundred classes," and intimated that it was impossible even to give a practical definition to the term "proletariat."

To the mind of the Bolshevist leader, the Bolshe-

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vist apologist, and his brother the Syndicalist, modern Society is divided into two classes, distinct and antagonistic: "Capital," the bourgeoisie, on one side; "Labor," the so-called proletariat, on the other. They see this modern Society as a great see-saw: "Capital" is up and "Labor" is down; comes "the revolution," and the board's balance shifts: "Capital" goes down, and "Labor" comes up, and now all is as it should be! And although, as Mr. Wells says, "the stuff is sheer nonsense," the Syndicalist still recites his theory.

It is easy enough to point out that such a theory is ethically wrong, because it avowedly seeks the elevation of one section of the community at the rest of the community's expense. It is easy, too, to show that it is politically wrong, because the deliberate adoption of government by a group or "class" is the negation of democracy, and the precise make-up or nomenclature of the governing group is immaterial. But the practical and pressing argument against any form of Syndicalism is not a matter of ethical or political ideals or theories, but of ordinary everyday fact. The "class unity" that it presupposes does not exist. An industrial government would not mean power and riches and happiness for "Labor;" it would mean the creation of virtual despotism for those few

workers who controlled the essential industries. We speak carelessly of Labor, Capital, Management, the Public, as if these were distinct and separate things. They are not; they are all mixed up together. It is impossible to raise any one group above the other three, because it is impossible to separate any one group from the rest: not only are their interests inter-related; the groups themselves overlap and blend.

The public is everyone, and everyone should belong to both the group of "capital" and the group of "labor." Those who do not save and invest are unwise. Those who do not work and accomplish something of value, however rich they may be, are parasites.

The hope that Syndicalism holds out to the worker may be seen, by a study of these simple points, to be the hope of a child's fairy tale, a glimmering will-o'-the-wisp that leads nowhere. The theory of the industrial State, and the theory of the class struggle upon which it rests, are contradicted not only by the ideals of democracy, but by the facts of practical life. A British economist, A. W. Kirkaldy, has forcefully defined Syndicalism as "each industry working for self against the community." There is no hope for "Labor" there!

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The "Labor State"

A movement exists at the present time toward what is called "functional representation" in government: that is to say, government should, it is argued, include representatives of industries and professions as well as of geographical areas, and specialists on certain technical matters should be officially active in the relation between those matters and the State. That is, it is needless to point out, a very interesting movement indeed. But to succeed it must be a movement of co-operation. It is no theory of industrial rule!

The march of our ideals is not toward class domination, but away from it. And the trend of our workaday lives is not toward more of class distinction, but constantly toward less. We are all busy human men and women who work together, who need each other. It is by working together more closely, by realizing our common aims and common needs, that we shall solve our problems in the end. The hope of progress for men and nations lies finally in the understanding and use of that interdependence that one writer, in a moment of high inspiration, has called "the greatest spiritual conquest of our age."

Terry and Tremaine

Cleveland, Ohio, January 20, 1921

THE "LABOR STATE"

What's the Matter with the "Class Struggle" Idea?

IN THE UNITED STATES

IN April, 1920, more than half a million American wage-earners, in widely varied industries, were thrown out of work as a result of a switchmen's strike on the railroads. The strike was started by a small group of men who were "protesting" against the discharge of a railroad worker, but it spread to great railroad centers throughout the country, and the position of the strikers, in one of the great "key industries," was such that for a time they could hold up industry all over the United States. And they did. It was an "outlaw" strike, to which not only public opinion, but the unions of railroad workers themselves, were opposed, and in a short time it was broken. But even in a few days its serious interference with transportation did an incalculable amount of harm.

IN RUSSIA

In June, 1918, about seven months after the Russian Bolsheviki overthrew the newly-formed democratic government of Russia, and set up an "industrial" rule, the Bolshevik Commissar of Communications reported that the railroad workers were making demands that amounted to the practical exploitation of, and despotism

over, all the other industrial workers in Russia. Owing to the basic importance of the railroads in the life of any country, and the nature of the "class rule" that made "Labor" theoretically the ruler in Russia, the railroad workers, under an honest Sovietism, could demand what they pleased, make the whole country subservient to them, dictate terms to every other laborer in the land of the Soviets. The leaders of the Bolsheviki were far too clever to allow such a state of affairs to continue, and they promptly stripped the railroad workers of their power, and brought all workers everywhere under State control. In other words, they simply went back on their boasted idea of "workingmen's rule," and turned it exactly upside down.

IN AUSTRALIA—OR ANYWHERE

In December, 1919, "The Socialist Review" published an article by an Australian journalist, which contained the following statement: "The coal miners could plunge the continent into darkness and stop all machinery in a couple of weeks, the seamen and railway men could, by united action, starve two-thirds of the people in the same period of time, the rural workers could stagnate the primary industries of the country in a month."

And all this time, and all over the civilized world, a certain type of "radical" and "agitator" has been calling on "Labor" to "rise up as one" and "seize all the power," and has been urging the definite idea of setting up a "labor State."

That idea, which is being pressed by groups of agitators, under various names in the different countries, is—in its simplest and most extreme form—briefly this: that the workers in every industry and trade, and of all kinds, should be organized into unions which should select delegates to a central labor council, and that this labor council would not only manage industry, but would rule the country. The Labor Council, "One Big Union," would *be* the government. "Labor" would rule. Not democracy, just the working people. That is the theory of the "industrial State." It might come to include a very large part of the population, it is true, but only in so far as they were *laborers*. "Labor" would be the power.

A "LABOR STATE"

Now what is the matter with that idea?

What is its connection with the facts we have just stated?

What do those facts really tell us?

What would it mean to "Labor" if "Labor" ruled?

If we read over again the first three paragraphs, we get the answer to these questions: *the so-called "rule of labor" would mean absolute autocratic power for the workers in the few "key industries," and absolute submission and exploitation for every other worker, in every other industry.*

"POSSESSION OF THE EARTH"

The I. W. W. agitator, and every other speechmaker of his kind, urges "One Big Union," and says that the workers must "take possession of

the earth." He also talks about something that he calls the "class struggle." It sounds very thrilling indeed. He holds forth a magnificent sort of "full dinner pail." Only his dinner pail, beautiful and shining as it is to look at, isn't full and never could be. It never could be other than stark empty, because as soon as you try to put anything in it the bottom drops out.

The people who urge these ideas, and whom we group together and call "syndicalists," are criticized, and their ideas are attacked, for a number of reasons, and from a number of points of view. This book is only interested in one point of view, and in one question. That point of view is the workers' own, because syndicalism makes its appeal and its promises to working people. And the question is the one we asked, and answered by a general statement, a few moments ago: *What would it mean to "Labor" if "Labor" ruled?* This book is an examination of some facts in the light of the "industrial rule" idea—or of the "industrial rule" idea in the light of some facts, however you choose to put it. There are facts a-plenty.

Of course we can learn a great deal on this subject from looking at Russia. And in the booklet on Bolshevism we took up some of the practical results of a definite experiment in a labor dictatorship. But Russia is thousands of miles away; and when we are setting out to study an idea that is talked of all around us,

we can go pretty far by looking at things right here at home.

"Labor" as "One"

All the arguments for "labor rule," for an "industrial State," rest on two statements, or hypotheses: first, that "Labor" is a unit; second, that the unit "Labor" and the unit "Capital" are deadly and irreconcilable enemies, striving towards opposite goals. We are told that "the working class and the employing class have nothing in common;" and then we are called to look upon "Labor" as a vast and beautiful oneness, a great "solidarity," made up of identical interests, mutual and unlimited devotions, common aims. We are asked to believe that the modern world is divided into two "classes." And we are assured that if the class "Labor" were just given all the power, all the benefits and riches would go to the class "Labor" as a whole, because the class "Labor" is one.

It is because neither of these hypotheses will hold water, or anything else, that the bottom drops, perforce, out of the speech-makers' "full dinner pail."

"Labor" is not "one." "Labor" is millions of human beings, many of them gathered together in groups whose interests clash. The rule of "Labor" in any country would mean the rule of the few labor groups that were in a strong enough position to dominate the others. That is the utter hollowness of any utopian plan for

an "industrial State" or "labor control." And we can see that very thing in the "outlaw" railroad strike.

The "Outlaw" Railroad Strike

At the beginning of April, 1920, a few hundred switchmen on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, and the Chicago Junction Railway "walked out." The strike was not called by the union leaders. It did not appear to be actuated by any specific demands for shorter hours or higher pay. It was evidently intended as a protest against the discharge of one worker, and the name of that man, the Chicago leader, was known; beyond that, the public knew very little. The great "railroad brotherhoods" called the men back to work, and the men refused to go. The strike swept like wildfire through the country.

The Railroad Workers' Power

A few workers in the furniture industry, in the clothing industry, in the textile factories, in any industry whose day-by-day continuance was not necessary to the maintenance of the country's normal life, could have done nothing with a strike like that. Imagine the amount of power that would lie in the hands of 700 possible furniture strikers! Just exactly none! But these men who struck in Chicago last April were switchmen on the railroads. They were joined by other switchmen on other railroads. And because they worked on the railroads, the

country, when they struck, lay almost powerless in their hands.

Only for a little while! This is not an industrial State! By the eighth of April the tie-up had reached New York, and the food situation in many cities had become very grave. But on the thirteenth the strikers had begun to go back to work. In a country like the United States, it is inconceivable that such a strike could long succeed. But it did more damage than could well be estimated. Its evil effects continued long after the strike itself had "petered out." And through it, *the working people suffered most.*

"Labor" is not a unit! Labor was really fighting Labor here, not because it wanted to, but because things could not work out in any other way. It was the industrial workers who bore the brunt of this exercise of the "key industries' " power.

The fight of the striking switchmen depended absolutely on their ability to "tie up the country."

And just what did "tying up the country" mean?

What the Strike Meant

It meant, of course, a great deal of annoyance to a few railroad owners, but under the circumstances it meant little or no financial loss. It meant a temporary crippling of business that brought loss to business men—manufacturers, merchants, capitalists of various kinds;

it was hard on business in every way. It inconvenienced the traveling public very greatly, of course. It caused a big money loss to the Government. It called a halt in production all over the country, and the effect of that, at that time when "production" was so cruelly needed, can scarcely be guessed. *It turned hundreds of thousands of men and women out of work, some of them for weeks. It threatened a serious food shortage, brought a menace to health, and did raise the price of food.*

In Pittsburgh alone the loss in industry *and wages* was reported as over $57,000,000.

In Gary, 12,000 steel workers, laid off at the beginning of the strike, were still out of work on the twenty-fifth of April.

In Chicago, on the eighth of May, men were still being laid off because of the continuing coal shortage due to the tie-up of cars.

In the automobile factories between New York and Chicago, 300,000 men were still out of employment in the last week in April.

And all this time the price of foodstuffs was of course forced up.

Here are a few brief "news items" from that strike:

"Chicago, April 6.—Between 15,000 and 18,000 packing-house workers were thrown out of work today by the unauthorized strike of switchmen in the district." (*New York Times*, April 7.)

Under the heading "Buffalo Crippled by

Freight Embargo," a dispatch of April 8 explained that railroad congestion due to the walk-out of switchmen had necessitated a freight embargo, and continued: "The embargo on all freight movements in and out of Buffalo railroad yards went into effect this morning, and by late afternoon its effect was felt seriously in some industries. The packing plants virtually were without shipments. Blast furnaces, steel and iron plants were working with about one-half their normal forces. Automobile and other manufacturing plants, unable to get raw materials, curtailed operation or ceased work entirely. It is estimated that between 1,500 and 2,700 men are idle. (*New York Sun and Herald*, April 8.)

SOME NEWS ITEMS

By April 7th, more than 50,000 men were out of work in Chicago as a result of the strike in which it is probable that by that time about 17,000 men were involved. A dispatch to the *New York Times* on that day stated: "Chicago tonight is facing complete paralysis of its industries due to a shortage of coal and an embargo on all incoming freight, owing to the switchmen's strike. . . . The crisis faced by Chicago is alarming. The city is practically isolated from freight or express communication with the rest of the country. Meat, butter, eggs, sugar and other food and fuel shipments to the city's millions have been halted, and a shortage is already being felt. Many businesses

have been shut down because of the freight blockade. . . . Not a carload of coal has been moved into the city for three days."

"Fort Worth, Texas, April 10.—Freight traffic was paralyzed here today, following the strike of 650 switchmen at midnight. Express companies refused to receive shipments on any basis, and cars of perishables are crowded onto many sidetracks in the suburbs." (*New York Times*, April 11.)

"Milwaukee, April 10.—Manufacturers say that plants will be closed down by Tuesday unless the strike is settled, and that thousands will be thrown out of work. The Produce Exchange predicts that the city will have a food famine within three days." (*New York Times*, April 11.)

On the 8th of April, 40,000 men had been thrown out of work in the Chicago packing plants alone.

"Pittsburgh, April 12.—More than 300,000 men will be idle in Western Pennsylvania, Eastern Ohio, and Northern West Virginia, unless there is a settlement of the rail strike within thirty-six hours, it was indicated tonight. One hundred and fifty thousand coal miners and 100,000 steel workers in the Pittsburgh industrial district, in addition to 50,000 men in other lines, must lay down their tools Wednesday unless the strikers return to work, which from present indications seems unlikely. Already more than

100,000 men are idle, with a dozen of the largest plants, and 100 coal mines, suspended." (*New York World*, April 13.)

Twenty-four hours later, there were 200,000 men out of work in the Pittsburgh district.

That same day, April 13, the report from Detroit showed 110,000 men laid off there.

BOASTING OF STARVATION

In the midst of this, the I. W. W. leader, William D. Haywood, issued a statement which showed that this flinging of Labor into war against Labor was something which syndicalist agitators really accepted quite as a matter of course. It was all very well, in speeches to laboring people, to talk of "Labor" being "one," to urge "the working class" to "seize the power" as a united force striking for the benefit of all workers. But in the midst of the suffering that the strike was causing, we have this:

"Detroit, April 11.—The switchmen's strike, said Haywood, might not result successfully, but he said it would bring America to its senses. '*New York is only five days away from starvation!*' he exclaimed." (*New York Times*, April 12.)

There are nearly six million people in New York City, and a few—proportionately a very few—are rich. But it wasn't the rich to whom the syndicalist leader boasted that starvation was so close.

And his boasts were not far wrong. Here are some further news items:

"Trenton, N. J., April 12.—Three thousand employes of the Bristol shipyards were forced into idleness. . . . Lack of coal and raw material, it is predicted, will force the closing down of many of the city's big industrial plants if the rail strike is not settled without delay. Fresh meat has become scarce and potatoes are selling today at $3.00 a basket." (*Associated Press.*)

FOOD CONDITIONS

In New York City, on April 12, Health Commissioner Copeland declared that "the lives and health of the people will be menaced" unless the strike ended soon. The *New York Times* report continued: "While the situation has not reached that point yet, Dr. Copeland said that if the food supply of this city should be materially reduced for so short a period as two weeks, he should not want to be responsible for health conditions that might arise from bubonic plague, cholera and typhus fever coming to our shores from European ports. Without proper nourishment the resistance of the people would be so low that an epidemic of the plagues of Europe would be sure to follow, in his opinion. . . . Very little food was received in the city yesterday. . . . Dr. Copeland said that it had been a month since New York received its normal daily food supply, on account of the strikes of longshoremen and harbor workers."

On April 13 it was reported that nearly

1,000,000 bushels of government-owned wheat were tied up in Minneapolis.

"Scranton, Pa., April 13.—More than 15,000 mine workers have been idle the last three days as a result of the strike on the Lackawanna Railroad, and this number will be swelled considerably tomorrow. Three Pennsylvania Coal Company collieries were compelled to close today for want of cars, and it was said by company officials that others would be shut down tomorrow. *As to food, there is not a pound of fresh meat in the city*, and sugar is selling at 30 cents a pound. Business of all kinds is demoralized, and some industries have been forced to shut down for want of fuel." (*New York Times*, April 14.)

"St. Louis, April 14.—A loss totaling many thousands of dollars in foodstuffs, which have been allowed to stand on the various railroad sidings throughout the city since the strike of railroad yardmen began a week ago, was reported by Police Captain Kirk today." (*New York Times*, April 15.)

The New York fuel situation was reported in the *Times* of April 13:

A REPORT ON FUEL

"Tidewater coal was coming into New York City through only one of the terminals yesterday, and it was predicted that another week of the strike would see the city at the end of its resources, and the big public utilities clamoring for fuel. About 4,100 cars of bituminous coal

are at the coal ports waiting transfer to the city. In addition to this there are about 4,200 cars of bituminous on the tracks between the mines and tidewater. Until the strike forced the practical closing of the terminals, this coal was being dumped on an average of 650 cars a day. The anthracite situation is practically the same."

The strike, begun April 1, commenced to break April 13, and by the end of the month it had so far gone to pieces that it was generally regarded as being "all over." But its ill effects were not over, by any means. Freight congestion and car shortage were still threatening both individuals and industries with various inconveniences and disasters. On April 25, John M. Glenn, Secretary of the Illinois Manufacturers' Association, telegraphed to Medill McCormick, Senator from Illinois:

"Manufacturing plants in Illinois will be compelled to close down, and untold disasters will follow, unless the railroads can move our cars. Closing of plants will create a calamity. . . . One trade authority estimates that in the automobile industry alone 300,000 men are out of employment between New York and Chicago. . . . " That same day the Chicago correspondent of the *New York Times* sent a dispatch to that paper:

"Industrial depression is imminent, due to the 'outlaw' railroad strike, assert Chicago manu-

facturers, merchants, *and labor leaders* who have an eye on affairs. . . . Eastward the great congested industrial districts are still crippled. In Gary, men laid off the first week of the strike are still out. In Hammond and the great Calumet industrial sector, many men are out of work and production is reduced. In Chicago, many plants have been getting along either with small supplies of material or reduced coal bins, and some have reduced their forces. The strike, according to some estimates, has cost the public approximately $6,000,000 a day for the last six weeks, and a total of $125,000,000 to the Government, aside from the loss it has caused industry and business."

"Still Being Laid Off"

But the end of the strike's results was not yet. At the close of the first week in May, Chicago *workmen were still being laid off* because industries were being shut down or reduced by the coal shortage; lack of coal was imperilling the city gas supply and the elevated railroads, and a dispatch (May 8) stated that the strike of railroad switchmen had "throttled the smaller manufacturers"—which of course meant that a large percentage of the smaller manufacturers' employees were out of work. At that time Cleveland was "still facing a tie-up due to the switchmen's strike"; the foundries of Cleveland were running about 50 per cent, the blast furnaces about 40 per cent, the steel works, oil refineries, and building construction were also affected; three

refineries reported that they were running one-third normal, 500 interior finishing workers in the building trades were out because it had not been possible to get into the city the materials needed for their work, and 1,000 men in general manufacturing plants were still laid off on May 10. In Brockton, Massachusetts—to turn to a different part of the country for the same facts—many shoe factories were running on part time and some were closed, as late as May 9, because of the effects of the tie-up on the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad. Detroit industries reported that they were "in need of everything that is shipped by freight," and that the inability to get steel threatened further shutdowns.

May 11 it was reported that hundreds of small coal mines in Pennsylvania and Eastern Ohio were closed because they could not get cars, and in the latter district 18,000 men were *working two hours a week*. The general industries of Columbus, Ohio, reported "55 per cent normal." Three Akron rubber plants were still "subnormal." As one brief statement summed it up, the strike was "still to be reckoned with."

One authority pointed out: "As prices are fixed almost entirely on the law of supply and demand, the freight situation has affected prices of everything immediately involved."

We have gone into the results of the brief railroad strike in a good deal of detail, because

in its dramatic bigness that strike illustrates very pointedly the two phases of the one great weakness of the idea of any "industrial government," government by any group or class. Our democratic government, with its system of "one man, one vote," is a government by citizens as citizens, as human beings, a government in which every man and every woman has a voice as an American citizen. A government by industrial workers, a government by "one big union," would inevitably result in handing over the real power to the powerful unions, to the workers in the *necessary* industries. That the "key workers" *could* tyrannize over all the others is one item of weakness, shown in that strike. As one authority on these questions, himself a Socialist, puts it:

"To Dominate and Exploit Society"

"In practice, syndicalism would inevitably result in a dangerous labor oligarchy; workers employed in particular occupations, such as mining and railroad transportation, for example, would be placed in a position enabling them to dominate and exploit society; a power not enjoyed to an equal degree by workers in other occupations, such as building, textile manufacture, and the like."*

That was written in March, 1920, just before our railroad strike, and the author went on to show how that very thing worked out in Russia. A few weeks later we sensed the possibil-

*John Spargo, "What Bolshevism Has Become," Harper's Magazine, May, 1920.

ities of it, in our observation of what was happening here in America.

The *power* so to tyrannize is one thing that that strike showed; the workers *could* do it. The other point that those events brought out is that they *would*. In one way, the inconvenience and disaster they were causing their fellow workers was nothing to the railroad switchmen; however much they must have regretted it personally, it did not—could not—for an instant stand in the way of their strike. The reason for that apparent hard-heartedness was that in another way this very power to bring calamity to other laborers meant everything; the strikers could fight only by fighting industry and the public. The "public" itself is largely made up of working people, as everyone knows, but we may call that a "side-issue." When we come to industry, however, it is clear that no fight could be waged on general industry without fighting labor directly.

LABOR VS. LABOR

We are not criticizing the railroad strikers themselves. If they were going to strike at all, it could only be by attacking their own so-called "class" through the very fact of their attacking the public *and industry*. Talk as they may about "Labor standing together to rule the world," every one has got to face the fact that "Labor" does *not* "stand together" as "one" by any means. The railroad strike was just one instance of Labor's fight actually turning against

Labor. Any group of men whose interests are identical is going to uphold those interests, and oppose the interests that clash. And it doesn't matter whether the President of the Pennsylvania Railroad is a "capitalist" named Samuel Rea or a committee of "laborers" headed by a workman named Thomas Jones, whether the chairman of the United States Steel Corporation's board of directors is a "capitalist" named Elbert H. Gary or a "laborer" named William G. Robinson, *the steel mills will have to shut down if the railroads stop running.*

"THE CLASS STRUGGLE"

Behind the fallacy of Labor rule for Labor's benefit lies the broader fallacy of the so-called "class struggle." The railroad strike helped to show us the hollowness of that idea. Yet it is the idea on which all syndicalist and I. W. W. argument depends. Here is what a veteran friend of Labor, John Graham Brooks, says on this subject:

"Some of the ablest men that Socialism has produced have learned a far larger thought, of *interests that infold not 'Labor' alone, but the whole stumbling yet climbing race of men and women in the world. They have learned that 'interests' bind us up and down, perpendicularly as well as horizontally. The claim that interests unite the wage-earners alone, and apart from all others, leads to the most treacherous morass*

through which they stagger to their goal. Labor has depths of interests that are in common, but *far greater depths of interests that are human and all-inclusive.*"*

That is the other side of the fallacy of the "class struggle" idea. "Interests" neither unite nor divide men as classes. We all have group interests, family interests, national interests, that divide and bind us in a number of ways. We have human interests in common. And we have the interests of society and community.

"General" Strikes Failures

It is because these "human" interests are greater than any so-called "class" interests that no "general strike" in industry has ever succeeded. A group of laborers will strike, against all comers, for the interests of their group. But no attempt to combine all the groups for one great industrial "general strike," or to persuade groups to put up a continued fight for the interests of other groups, has ever been successful. Such strikes have started out on a wave of emotion and "class struggle" talk. But when the echoes of the talk died away, the workers began to see that their interests were not "class interests," but individual, group and human interests; and the strikes petered out. The syndicalists say that some of these strikes "succeeded," but when we examine their claim we see that it merely means that they "succeeded" in making some trouble for a little

*John Graham Brooks, "American Syndicalism" (Macmillan). (Italics ours.)

while; they did not succeed in holding "the working class" together, or in attaining their objects.

An interesting example, because it had everything in its favor, was the attempt at a "general strike" in Stockholm in 1909. There was never less lawlessness, never more restraint on both sides. The strikers tried to avoid hurting the public, co-operated with the police. More than 250,000 men went out at first. But soon not only "the rich and the half-rich," but the workers themselves, "struck against the strike." A significant fact was that the farmers and farm workers could not be kept from furnishing food to people. They were "organized," but their interests were in selling food, not in striking; so they refused to go on with the strike. They explained that they were not interested in being "as one with city Labor." And in the cities, as the strikers themselves began to feel the pinch of things, they, too, struck against the strike.

The I. W. W. harps on "the class struggle" from night to morning and from morning to night. But the I. W. W. itself can show no beautiful unity to make its theory a fact. Even within the I. W. W. organization there is almost nothing on which the members agree. Says that very careful student, Dr. Brooks:

"Violent Differences"

"We need nothing far afield to answer the practical demands of the I. W. W. and of a very much larger body of labor now asking to

take on their shoulders the main direction of business and politics. . . . *It is mere hallucination that the I. W. W. are in agreement on principles or their practice.* The difference in opinions among Socialists and trade unionists is bewildering enough, but among American syndicalists these differences are both more violent and contradictory. . . . *If everything claimed by their complete program were put at their disposal tomorrow, they would be more fiercely at odds with each other in their first meeting,* because the prizes of place and power would be immediately at their disposal. From the first hour there would be a conservative, middle-of-the-road, and radical section."*

Now we are not finding fault with any labor unions, or with any labor movement. We are not "attacking" the I. W. W. or any other body of syndicalists. We are simply pointing out that, except to the workers who belong to what one writer calls "the luckily placed minority," the adoption of the syndicalist idea would bring no freedom or power. *No syndicalist plan has ever offered the slightest guarantee of peace among clashing Labor interests, or of protection against political domination by the "luckily placed" few.*

POLITICAL INFLUENCE

The English Guild Socialists, who admit a political State, with limited power, beside the Labor body, come fairly near to grips with these problems, but their theories fall, so far, lament-

*John Graham Brooks, "Labor's Challenge to the Social Order" (Macmillan). (Italics ours.)

ably short of conquering them. Of their aims and efforts Dr. Brooks says, in part:

"It is claimed that politics will be wholly eliminated from industry, but *not a stray atom of proof is given us to show how or why this is possible.* What, again, is to keep these guilds at peace among themselves? . . . These guilds are to be industrial and therefore in many cases to cover at least the national area. This means *some gigantic bodies with corresponding political influence, such as we should have in our mining and transportation guilds.*"*

In industry, in every phase of human life, there is "struggle" a-plenty. But it is not a "class struggle." It is the natural struggle of the human being to advance his interests as an individual, and therefore to advance the interests of the group—whatever that may be—to which he belongs. The agitator talks about nothing but "Labor" and "Capital," about the "war of classes." But we have seen already how one group of Labor, when it started out to fight for its own group interests, found itself bringing real suffering among other Labor groups. And we have looked at the history of "general strike" attempts, which show that these group interests are too much at variance to fuse for a "class war." To point out these things is not to criticize labor movements or to find fault with "Labor." Far from it. It is simply to call attention to the

*John Graham Brooks, "Labor's Challenge to the Social Order" (Macmillan). (Italics ours.)

fact that what is called "Labor" is really a great number of human beings!

But let us look at another experiment in labor control.

A Great Labor Movement

In various parts of the civilized world, in recent years, has spread the movement of the "co-operative stores." Not very generally known in the United States, the scheme has been very interestingly carried out in Switzerland, Denmark, Ireland, Belgium, and many other countries. Not a Socialistic or syndicalistic movement, having nothing whatever to do with politics, it is none the less a "working class" system of group purchase, sale, distribution, even manufacture, in which individual profits have been done away with, and there has been a sort of community "share-and-share-alike." There is no possibility of a "class struggle" here. It is all a labor movement. But has there been complete "industrial peace"? Nothing of the sort! Where the interests of the "labor" employers and the "labor" employees have clashed, they have quarreled.

"We have had instances inside co-operative stores in this country showing that working-class directors act precisely in the manner of capitalist employers when beset by the same problems. . . . This 'labor problem' is everywhere in the co-operative movement.

"A large business like the Leeds Co-operative Society had a body of teamsters in its employ.

Some years ago, these teamsters asked a raise of three shillings in their wages. The demand was finally granted, but with restrictions which so angered the men that they struck. This brought on a 'sympathetic strike' of teamsters in outside private firms, 4,000 in all. Clerks in the Co-operative store refused to touch 'tainted' goods, and were discharged. A sympathetic strike was least tolerable of all.

"The next stage is thus reported: 'A meeting of the Leeds branch of the Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees thereupon demanded permission from their Executive Council to strike in support of the carters, *and in order to secure for themselves the minimum wage, which has been the subject of so much discussion in co-operative circles.* The members of the Shop Assistants' Union, employed by the Co-operative Society, also decided to take the same course.

"*We now know that among co-operators a strike may occur which brings into the war zone about every sort of dispute known under capitalism:* wage minimum, overtime, discharge of men, trade union arrogance, hours and conditions of work. Capitalism can not here be made the scapegoat. *Labor strikes against Labor and under a strictly Labor regime.* All the taunts, recriminations, responsibilities, must be taken by the Labor group."*

*John Graham Brooks, "Labor's Challenge to the Social Order" (Macmillan). (Italics ours.)

It is a significant item, too, that this great Labor activity of the Co-operatives started out "to do away with the wage system. They were to 'work for themselves in a kind of brotherhood.' They would at any rate 'hire only their own members.' Nothing like this has happened. At the present moment, in England alone they must have nearly 150,000 to whom wages are paid as in other business."*

A NOTE ON RUSSIA

From Russia the tragic failure of "the dictatorship of the proletariat" cries out to all the world the utter hollowness of the "industrial State" idea. There has never been so cruel a mockery as the so-called "working-man's republic" of the Bolsheviki. *Soviet Russia is the one country in all the world where the individual worker has ceased to be a free man and is the slave of the State.*† We need not go into any further details about Russia now. But here, to remind us the more distinctly of what has happened there, is one clear-sighted American's summary of the Soviet experiment: "The most centralized and autocratic government of modern times has sprung up in Russia, though 95 per cent of the people involved did not adhere to the political theories, and would repudiate the authority if they could. . . . A revolution which started with soldiers' councils voting

*John Graham Brooks, "Labor's Challenge to the Social Order" (Macmillan). (Italics ours.)

† Bulgaria has recently passed a law demanding one year's compulsory labor from men and six months' from women, but this law lacks the military and other freedom-destroying features of the Russian decrees and codes.

on whether or not they would salute their officers . . . a revolution which was marked in the beginning by committees of working men deposing factory managers and 'democratizing industry' to the limit of socialistic imagination, has passed to quite another phase. There are no more Soldiers' Councils. Instead, there is an army dominated by a system of discipline that would make a Prussian officer green with envy."*

OUR SAFEGUARD—"ONE MAN, ONE VOTE"

There are always competitions and the possibility of quarrels among men and groups of men. But we have here in this country—in any democracy—one safeguard against tyranny by any one group. That safeguard is in our form of government. It is summed up in the brief phrase, "One man, one vote." Every American has the same political rights as every other American, and he has those rights simply *as an American.* Our government is not a perfect thing; it has shown itself sadly capable of abuses, of follies and stupidities and different kinds of actual corruption. But it is a government of *human* political rights. We hope that ways may be found to conquer its abuses, and that the people will become more alive to their own responsibility in governing. For only in the responsibility of our citizens *as citizens* can our country grow stronger and better with the passing years. Not as laborers, not as capital-

*Frank A. Vanderlip, "What Happened to Europe" (Macmillan).

ists, not as professional men, but *as human beings*, our democracy gives us equal political rights. And those equal political rights save us, as human beings, from the tyranny of any class rule.

Democracy and Interdependence

We saw, in looking over the records of the outlaw railroad strike, that "Labor" was not united, that one group of laborers was able and willing to sacrifice the interests of other groups of laborers for the gaining of its own special ends. But there was something else to be seen in that strike.

It showed that complete unity did not exist in any so-called "Labor class." It also showed that there was a real approach to such unity in the whole up-and-down structure of industry itself.

The railroad strikers "tied up industry." And when they hit any industry they hit it as a whole. From top to bottom, all the way through, it felt the blow. True, the poor must feel such a blow more keenly than the rich; but the entire industry suffered. Manufacturers and labor leaders were as one in appealing against the "calamitous" results that would follow the continuance of such a "tie-up."

Moreover, so far as the public and other industries were concerned it did not matter an atom whether the railroads were being tied

up by "Labor" or "Capital." What mattered was that something had happened to transportation. What the thing resolved itself into, for all practical purposes, was not a fight between "Labor" and "Capital," but a blocking by one industry of the activities of other industries.

The Real Unity

In this great industrial country it is impossible to pull the "interests" of "Capital" and "Labor" apart and fling the two forces into two opposing camps. You can not even separate their activities. Honest conflicts there are, aims and interests that do clash, just as there are among groups of all kinds, even among families; but to try to turn these differences into a positive and far-reaching opposition is to run counter to the facts. The facts of our industrial life show plainly enough that industry is all woven together; if we try to pull the threads apart we have no fabric left. Moreover, the actual distinctions between "Capital" and "Labor" are not so great as the Syndicalists would have us believe. As we ourselves have seen, many thousands of workmen, investing their savings in the country's industries, have themselves become capitalists. There is no hard-and-fast line between the two. "Laborers" *are* "capitalists." "Capitalists" are workers. There is a "substantial identity" here!

It is not only Labor agitators and mistaken dreamers who have forced the artificial issue of the class struggle, of course. In the sudden

upspringing of our industrial life, in the exploitation of our vast natural resources, when it was so easy to make fortunes quickly, many of those men whom we have grouped together under the name of "Capitalists" and "Capital" did make terrible mistakes, and some of these mistakes are being repeated by individuals still. We can not gloss over those mistakes now. And those of us who have studied the history of "labor warfare" have found heart-sickening cruelties of belligerency on both sides. But we must all try to learn from the mistakes of the past. And we must all try to face the actual conditions of the present.

THE TOUCH OF EXPERIENCE

There is no unity of "class struggle" that means anything deep or lasting, or that can lead to any good, today. Instead, there is a vast network of aims and interests that can not honestly be separated. Capitalists and employers are seeing this, as all over the civilized democratic world they try to work out the plans that seem best and most desirable for meeting their workers' specific needs. Workers are seeing it, and most of their organized groups, even to the most radical bodies in restless European countries, are "turning down Bolshevism" one by one. You can not hand government, the power to rule, over to any one class for that one class's benefit. There is not enough class unity anywhere to bring about even such class benefit as a result. At the first touch of

experience, of actual workaday fact, the "class" itself falls apart. You can not dole out a nation's political rights—or withhold them—to men as "Laborers" and "Capitalists."

WORKING TOGETHER

Our only governmental safeguard lies in democracy. In governing as human beings, we preserve and protect our human rights. And in government and industry alike the solution of our present perplexities lies in the recognition of the interests we share, the understanding of the falseness of "class" differences. In a former booklet we quoted one of the National Lamp workers on the subject of careful work, "When we keep down shrinkage it's good for the company and it's good for us." It is not in Soviet Russia where the workers have been made the slaves of their own effort toward syndicalism, it is not in the meetings of wild dreamers where a leader boasts of the ability of one group of laborers to starve all New York, that the hope of the world's just future lies. It is, rather, in sane human co-operation, wherever and however that exists. We can not govern as "classes." We can not work as "classes." Only by working together as human beings can we face the new day.

This is the twelfth booklet of a series. Other booklets will be issued from time to time.

The preceding booklets of the series as listed below are available:

5. The League of Nations.
6. Bolshevism and the Workers.
7. Your Vote and You.
8. Thrift.
9. Be a Capitalist.
10. Wages.
11. The Excess Profits Tax.

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